

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSM-03 SIG-03
MMO-01 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 PA-01
CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 HA-05 /096 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RNA/NE:AAVACCARO:MP
APPROVED BY INR/RNA:PGRIFFIN
SSM:JTM Candrew
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
SSM

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P 210004Z MAR 78
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USINT BAGHDAD PRIORITY
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 524 - MARCH 20, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL-LEBANON. FIGHTING CONTINUED THIS MORNING IN SOUTH LEBANON, PARTICULARLY IN THE VICINITY OF TYRE. THERE WERE ARTILLERY BARRAGES IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE SOUTH, AND AIRSTRIKES TODAY ALONG THE TYRE COASTAL AREA SOUTH OF THE LITANI. ISRAELI GROUND FORCES SEEMED TO HAVE ACHIEVED BY LATE YESTERDAY EVENING THE IDF'S STATED OBJECTIVE OF ADVANCING TO THE HEIGHTS OVERLOOKING THE COASTAL PLAIN; IDF UNITS DO NOT APPEAR TO HAVE MOVED FURTHER AS YET THIS MORNING AND THEIR ACTIVITY SEEMS LIMITED TO CONFRONTING REMAINING PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE.

2. DURING THE NIGHT, SEVERAL MORE KATYUSHA ROCKETS REPORTEDLY FELL ON NORTHERN ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS. IN THIS REGARD, WE NOTE THAT THE IDF'S CAPTURE OF ALMOST ALL TERRITORY SOUTH OF THE LITANI STILL LEAVES ONE SERIOUS PROBLEM AREA--THE NABATIYAH REGION NORTH OF THE RIVER. PALESTINIAN ARTILLERY AND ROCKETS POSITIONED THERE ARE WITHIN RANGE OF MOST OF THE NORTHEAST "FINGER" OF ISRAEL, AND WE EXPECT THE PALESTINIANS TO CONTINUE TO SHELL NORTHERN ISRAEL FROM THESE EMPLACEMENTS. MOREOVER, MUCH OF THE PALESTINIAN ARTILLERY IS SCATTERED IN SMALL CAMOUFLAGED UNITS THROUGHOUT THIS AREA, AND IT IS UN-
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LIKELY THAT ARTILLERY AND AIRSTRIKES CAN COMPLETELY SILENCE IT.

3. ISRAELI OFFICIALS ARE UNDOUBTEDLY CONCERNED OVER THE DANGERS POSED BY PALESTINIAN ARTILLERY AND ROCKETS IN THE NABATIYAH AREA. THUS, WITH THE IDF SEEMINGLY HAVING TESTED SYRIAN REACTION BY MOVING WITHIN A COUPLE MILES OF SYRIAN UNITS IN THE VICINITY OF HASBAYYA, A POSSIBLE IDF GROUND ACTION TOWARD NABATIYAH--4 TO 5 MILES SOUTH OF FORWARD SYRIAN UNITS--CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED ENTIRELY. IN THIS VEIN, ISRAELI OFFICIALS HAVE CONTINUED TO STRESS PUBLICLY THE NEED TO HALT THE SHELLING OF NORTHERN ISRAEL, AND IDF SOURCES MADE A POINT YESTERDAY OF PASSING A REPORT TO OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE THAT 111 ROUNDS HAVE IMPACTED ON NORTHERN ISRAEL SINCE MARCH 15.

4. THE OVERPOWERING IDF ADVANCE TOWARD THE COAST YESTERDAY SEEMS TO HAVE DAMPENED THE PALESTINIAN'S ARDOR. PALESTINIAN FORCES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN DISORGANIZED BY THE RAPID ISRAELI ADVANCE, AND THEY APPARENTLY ARE ATTEMPTING TO BEGIN HIT-AND-RUN GUERRILLA RAIDS ON THE ISRAELI FORCES IN THE SOUTH. OUR ARMY ATTACHE IN TEL AVIV HAS

COMMENTED THAT THE IDF HAS NOT HAD TO DEAL WITH SUCH TACTICS BEFORE, AND THEIR AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEMS POSED BY GUERRILLA WARFARE SEEMS TO BE LESS THAN MIGHT BE EXPECTED.

5. REACTIONS. THE ISRAELI INVASION IS HAVING A UNIFYING EFFECT ON THE ARABS. NEARLY ALL ARABS HAVE CONDEMNED THE ISRAELI ATTACK, WITH SHARP CRITICISM COMING FROM THE MODERATES AS WELL AS THE REJECTIONISTS. EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KAMEL CALLED THE ISRAELI OBJECTIVE OF KILLING PALESTINIANS "GENOCIDE."

6. THE JORDANIANS ARE LEADING THE DRIVE TO DEVELOP A UNITED ARAB STAND. KING HUSSEIN CALLED FOR AN EMERGENCY
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ARAB SUMMIT, AND EIGHT STATES OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA HAVE ALREADY SUPPORTED SUCH A MEETING. MINISTER OF STATE IBRAHIM TRAVELED TO CAIRO YESTERDAY TO GATHER EGYPTIAN SUPPORT. FROM THERE, HE IS TO GO ON TO NORTH AFRICA. THE JORDANIANS WERE ALSO IN TOUCH WITH THE SYRIANS.

7. THESE MOVES PUT SADAT IN A VERY DIFFICULT POSITION BECAUSE MANY ARABS, BOTH MODERATES AND REJECTIONISTS, SEE AN ELEMENT OF TRUTH IN SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM'S STATEMENT THAT SADAT'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM AND THE SUBSEQUENT ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DIALOGUE FACILITATED THE ISRAEL-INCURSION. (WITH THE EGYPTIANS AGREEING NOT TO USE THE MILITARY OPTION, THEIR ARGUMENT RUNS, THE ISRAELIS DID NOT HAVE TO FEAR AN ARAB MILITARY RESPONSE.) THE OTHER ARABS WILL USE THE ISRAELI ACTION TO PRESSURE SADAT TO BREAK OFF HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH BEGIN.

8. DESPITE THE MOVE TOWARD ARAB UNITY, SHARP CLEAVAGES STILL EXIST IN THEIR RANKS. THE STEADFASTNESS FRONT--SYRIA, ALGERIA, PDRY, LIBYA AND THE PLO--ARE MEETING IN DAMASCUS TO ESTABLISH A UNIFIED APPROACH TO THE LEBANON PROBLEM. THE MEETING OF THIS MORE RADICAL GROUP WILL MAKE THE HOLDING OF AN ARAB LEAGUE MEETING--ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 27--MORE DIFFICULT.

9. THE IRAQIS, MEANWHILE, HAVE SENT A CONVOY WITH MEDICAL AND MILITARY SUPPLIES ACROSS SYRIA. WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THIS WILL BECOME A DAILY OCCURRENCE. IRAQI VOLUNTEERS ARE ALSO LIKELY TO BE SENT TO LEBANON. THESE PROBABLY WILL INCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE'S MILITIA, WHICH WAS ACTIVE IN LEBANON DURING THE CIVIL WAR. (SECRET)

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10. ISRAEL. BOLSTERED BY A RESURGENCE IN PERSONAL POPULARITY, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON TODAY PROBABLY CONVINCED THAT HE IS IN A MUCH STRONGER POSITION TO DEAL WITH THE US THAN HE WAS JUST TWO WEEKS AGO. IN THE SHORT RUN, HIS STAND ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED LESS BY WHAT THE US ADMINISTRATION SAYS OR DOES THAN BY WHAT HE LEARNS FIRSTHAND CONCERNING THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT HE CAN STILL COUNT ON AMONG AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL'S SUPPORTERS IN CONGRESS.

11. AS A RESULT OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRORIST RAID AND ISRAEL'S SUBSEQUENT INTERVENTION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT IS NO LONGER UNDER FIRE AT HOME FOR MISHANDLING US-ISRAELI RELATIONS AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT. DISSENSION WITHIN THE ISRAELI CABINET HAS QUICKLY FADED INTO THE BACKGROUND, AND NEARLY ALL OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE RALLIED BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT.

12. ONLY A FEW ISRAELIS QUESTION THE WISDOM OF ISRAELI FORCES REMAINING IN LEBANON. INDEED, THE ISRAELI PUBLIC NOT ONLY WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTS THE MOVE BUT IS CONVINCED THAT IT WILL NOT JEOPARDIZE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

13. BEGIN DOUBTLESS WILL SEEK TO TURN RECENT EVENTS, INCLUDING THIS SHOW OF DOMESTIC SOLIDARITY, TO HIS ADVANTAGE DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON. WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PALESTINIAN RAID STILL FRESH IN THE US PUBLIC MIND, BEGIN IS LIKELY TO MAKE A STRONG PITCH FOR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR HIS NEGOTIATING STANCE- ESPECIALLY HIS OPPOSITION TO AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINIAN STATE. IN PRIVATE MEETINGS WITH US OFFICIALS HE MAY ALSO HOPE TO FOCUS PRIMARILY ON RESOLVING THE LEBANESE PROBLEM AND TO GIVE SHORT SHRIFT TO THE BROADER ISSUES AFFECTING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

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14. BEGIN HAS MADE IT CLEAR IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS THAT HE WILL NOT MODERATE HIS PEACE PLAN. AT MOST, HE AND FOREIGN MINISTER DAYAN ARE LIKELY TO OFFER SOME COSMETIC CHANGES IN THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION. THEY ALSO MAY SEEK TO PAPER OVER THE DIFFERENCES THAT HAVE EMERGED BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE US OVER UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

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15. DAYAN SEEMED TO BE HINTING AT SUCH A POSSIBILITY IN A BACKGROUND INTERVIEW HE GAVE TO ISRAELI JOURNALISTS LAST WEEK. HE INDICATED THAT THE GAP BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL ON THE LANGUAGE IN THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AFFECTING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION WAS RELATIVELY NARROW. HE ALSO ARGUED THAT BEGIN'S SELF-RULE PROPOSAL FOR THE "T" ANK W S A SIGNIFICANT STEP TOWARD FULFILLING THE D A L ROVISION IN RESOLUTION 242.

16. THE ISRAELIS REMAIN UNSURE OF SADAT'S MINIMUM CONDITIONS FOR MOVING AHEAD WITH BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND STILL APPEAR TO CLING TO THE HOPE THAT HE WILL BE PREPARED TO CONCLUDE A SEPARATE PEACE AGREEMENT IF SATISFACTORY WORDING CAN BE WORKED OUT ON THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES. DAYAN, FOR EXAMPLE, IMPLIED THAT SADAT HAS SOFTENED HIS STAND IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS AND NOW NO LONGER APPEARED TO BE INSISTING ON DIRECT JORDANIAN PARTICIPATION BEFORE POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS CAN RESUME.

17. HINTS THAT BEGIN WILL WITHDRAW HIS OFFER TO RETURN ALL OF THE SINAI TO EGYPT IF HIS PEACE PLAN IS REJECTED CONTINUE TO APPEAR OCCASIONALLY IN THE ISRAELI PRESS AND IN STATEMENTS BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THESE WARNINGS PRESUMABLY ARE AIMED AT OBTAINING SOME TACTICAL SECRET

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LEVERAGE IN THE CURRENT SITUATION AND AT PROBING SADAT'S INTENTIONS. (CONFIDENTIAL) VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, MONITORING FACILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE071842
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AAVACCARO:MP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780123-1162
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780342/aaaabjgd.tel
Line Count: 258
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7b2f61c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3254268
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTSUM 524 - MARCH 20, 1978 LONDON FOR KINSOLVING PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
TAGS: PINR, MARR, EG, IS
To: SINAI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7b2f61c0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014